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ORATION

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THE SOCIETY OF PHI BETA KAPPA,

AT CAMBRIDGE,

AUGUST 24, 1848.

BY HORACE BUSHNELL.

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ORATION.

MR. PRESIDENT, AND BRETHREN OF THE SOCIETY, —

THERE are many subjects, or truths, and sometimes those of the greatest moment, which cannot well be formally announced. They require to be offered rather by suggestion. They will enter the mind and be in it only as they are of it, generated by the fertile activity of a meditative spirit. This is frequently true even in matters of scientific discovery, where, also, it is often remarked, that the best suggestives are the humblest instances ; such as the mind can play itself upon with the greatest facility, because it is not occupied by their magnitude or oppressed by their grandeur. Some lamp is seen swinging on its chain, some apple falling from the tree, and then, perchance, the thoughtful looker-on, taking the hint that nature gives, will be able also to look in ; thus to uncover truths not measured by their instances, — laws of the universe.

More true is this, if possible, of moral subjects ; for there are many of these which the soul will not suffer to be thrust upon her. She must ask for them, catch

the note of them in some humble suggestive, entertain them thoughtfully, take them into her feeling, and there, encouraging, as it were, their modesty, tempt them to speak. So especially it is with the subject in which I desire to engage you on the present occasion. To name it, or in definite form to propose it, would be in fact to hide it, or to thrust myself between it and your minds. I must rather seek to draw it forth from you.

Let me call to my aid, then, some thoughtful spirit in my audience; not a poet, of necessity, or a man of genius, but a man of large meditation, one who is accustomed to observe, and, by virtue of the warm affinities of a living heart, to draw out the meanings that are hid so often in the humblest things. Returning into the bosom of his family, in some interval of care and labor, he shall come upon the very unclassic and certainly unimposing scene, — his children and a kitten playing on the floor together; and just there, possibly, shall meet him suggestions more fresh, and thoughts of higher moment concerning himself and his race, than the announcement of a new-discovered planet or the revolution of an empire would yield him. He surveys, with a meditative feeling, this beautiful scene of muscular play, — the unconscious activity, the exuberant life, the spirit of glee, — and there rises in his heart the conception, that possibly he is here to see the prophecy or symbol of another and

higher kind of play, which is the noblest exercise and last end of man himself. Worn by the toils of years, perceiving, with a sigh, that the unconscious joy of motion here displayed is spent in himself, and that now he is effectually tamed to the doom of a working creature, he may yet discover, in the lively sympathy with play that bathes his inward feeling, that his soul is playing now, — enjoying, without the motions, all it could do in them, manifold more than it could, if he were down upon the floor himself, in the unconscious activity and lively frolic of childhood. Saddened he may be to note how time and work have changed his spirit and dried away the playful springs of animal life in his being; yet he will find, or ought, a joy playing internally over the face of his working nature, which is fuller and richer as it is more tranquil, which is to the other as fulfilment to prophecy, and is, in fact, the prophecy of a better and far more glorious fulfilment still.

Having struck, in this manner, the great world-problem of WORK AND PLAY, his thoughts kindle under the theme and he pursues it.

Now the living races are seen, at a glance, to be offering in their history, everywhere, a faithful type of his own. They show him what he himself is doing and preparing, — all that he finds in the manifold experience of his own higher life. They have all their gambols, all their sober cares and labors. The lambs

are sporting on the green knoll, the anxious dams are bleating to recall them to their side. The citizen beaver is building his house by a laborious carpentry, and the squirrel is lifting his sail to the wind on the swinging top of the tree. In the music of the morning, he hears the birds playing with their voices, and, when the day is up, sees them sailing round in circles on the upper air, as skaters on a lake, folding their wings, dropping and rebounding, as if to see what sport they can make of the solemn laws that hold the upper and lower worlds together. And yet these play-children of the air he sees again descending to be carriers and drudges, fluttering and screaming anxiously about their nest, and confessing by that sign that not even wings can bear them clear of the stern doom of work. Or passing to some quiet shade, meditating still on this careworn life, playing still internally with ideal fancies and desires unrealized, there returns upon him there, in the manifold and spontaneous mimicry of nature, a living show of all that is transpiring in his own bosom, — in every flower, some bee humming over his laborious chemistry and loading his body with the fruits of his toil, — in the slant sunbeam, populous nations of motes quivering with animated joy, and catching, as in play, at the golden particles of the light with their tiny fingers. Work and play, in short, are the universal ordinance of God for the living races, in which they symbolize the fortune and interpret the errand of man. No creature lives that must not work and may not play.

Returning now to himself and to man, and meditating yet more deeply, as he is thus prepared to do, on work and play, and play and work, as blended in the compound of our human life, asking again what is work and what is play, what are the relations of one to the other, and which is the final end of all, he discovers, in what he was observing round him, a sublimity of import, a solemnity even, that is deep as the shadow of eternity.

To proceed intelligently with our subject, we need, first of all, to resolve or set forth the precise philosophic distinction between work and play; for upon this distinction all our illustrations will depend. That, in practical life, we have any hesitancy in making the distinction, I by no means intimate. At least, there are many youths in the universities, not specially advanced in philosophy, who are able to make their election with the greatest facility, be the distinction itself clear or not. But as I propose, on the present occasion, to speak of the state of play in a manner that involves a philosophic extension of the idea, I am required to distinguish the idea by a careful analysis.

You will discover, at once, that work and play, taken as modes of mere outward, muscular activity, cannot be distinguished. There is motion in both, there is an exercise of force in both, both are under the will as acting on the muscular system; so that, taken outwardly, they both fall into the same category. Indeed,

they cannot be discriminated till we pass within to view them metaphysically, considering their springs of action, their impulse, aim, and object.

Here the distinction becomes evident at once, namely, that work is activity *for* an end ; play, activity *as* an end. One prepares the fund or resources of enjoyment, the other is enjoyment itself. Thus, when a man goes into agriculture, trade, or the shop, he consents to undergo a certain expenditure of care and labor, which is only a form of painstaking, rightly named, in order to obtain some ulterior good which is to be his reward. But when the child goes to his play, it is no painstaking, no means to an end,— it is itself rather both end and joy. Accordingly, it is a part of the distinction I state, that work suffers a feeling of aversion, and play excludes aversion. For the moment any play becomes wearisome or distasteful, then it is work, — an activity that is kept up, not as being its own joy, but for some ulterior end or under some kind of constraint.

Another form of the distinction is made out, and one that is more accurately adapted to philosophic uses, by saying that work is done by a conscious effort of will, and that play is impulsive, having its spring in some inspiration, or some exuberant fund of life back of the will. So that one is something which we require of ourselves, the other something that we must control ourselves not to do. We work because we must, because prudence impels. We play because

we have in us a fund of life that wants to expend itself.

But man is not a muscular creature only; he does not consist of mere bones and integuments. He is a creature also of thought, feeling, intelligence, and character. And what we see of him in the muscular life he is, or should be, in the higher domain of spirit. Regarding the child as a creature full of life and spontaneous motion, thus and therefore a playing creature, we are to see in him, not the measure, but the sign, of that which shall be. For as the race began with an outward paradise, which, being lost, may yet offer the type of a higher paradise to be gained, so each life begins with muscular play, that, passing through the hard struggles of work, it may carry its ideal with it, and emerge, at last, into a state of inspired liberty and spontaneous beauty. In short, we are to conceive that the highest and complete state of man, that which his nature endeavours after and in which only it fulfils its sublime instinct, is the state of play.

In this view, study is to be regarded as work, until the disciple gets beyond voluntary attention, application constrained by prudence, rivalry, ambitious preparations for life, and begins to dwell in beauty and truth as inspirations. For then he passes into another and more perfect kind of activity, an activity that is spontaneous or impulsive, and is to itself both reward and end.

And this kind of activity, call it enthusiastic or in-

spired, or by whatever name, we shall discover is commonly regarded as a higher and nobler, in fact, the only perfect activity conceivable. In the article of memory, for example, we regard a spontaneous memory, that which mirrors all the past before us without any effort of recollection, as the only perfect memory. But a reflective memory, supported by mnemonic contrivances, and assisted by recollective efforts, is so far in the nature of work, and the necessity of work argues the imperfection of the instrument. Our idea of a perfect or complete memory is, that it reports the past spontaneously, or in play.

When we ascend to the higher modes of action, such as involve the inventive exercises of reason, fancy, imagination, or the sentimental exercises of feeling, passion, humor, we find that we are even offended by the signs of work; or, if not offended, we are unsatisfied, just in proportion to the evidence of work or effort obtruded on our attention. For work, we allow, argues defect or insufficiency, and to say that the man *labors* is the same as to say that he fails. Nothing is sufficient or great, nothing fires or exalts us, but to feel the divine energy and the inspiring liberty of play.

Then, again, as we ascend still higher, to modes of activity that are moral and religious, we become quite intolerant of any thing in the nature of work. To be good or true, for the sake of some ulterior

end, is the same as to value goodness and truth second to that end, which is the same as to have no sense of either. So, if some benefit or gift is bestowed upon us by constraint, and not from any compassion for our lot or interest in our welfare, we deem the gift itself an insult, and call the charity hypocrisy. In like manner, purity forced by self-restraint or maintained by mere prudence argues impurity. True purity, that which answers the perfect ideal, is spontaneous, unfolding its artless, unaffected spotlessness in the natural freedom of a flower. It could not defile itself without an effort. Nay, I suppose that perfect purity could not even blush. Even self-denial is never a complete virtue till it becomes a kind of self-indulgence. It must bathe itself in the fountains of a self-oblivious charity. Forgetting fame and reward, rising above the constraints of prudence, and losing the nature of work, it must become the spontaneous impulse of our being, a joyous overflow of the soul's liberty.

It follows, in this view, that work is in its very nature temporary, or should be, having for its end the realization of a state of play. Passing through activity *for* an end, we are to come into activity *as* an end, beyond which, of course, there is nothing higher. As we rest in the one, we are to cease from the other. And might we not have said as much beforehand? Who that considers the ethereal

nature of a soul can conceive that the doom of work is any thing more than a temporary expedient, introduced or suffered to perfect our discipline? To imagine a human creature dragged along, or dragging himself along, under the perpetual friction of work, never to ascend above it,—a creature in God's image, aching for God's liberty, beating ever vainly, and with crippled wings, that he may lift himself into some freer, more congenial element,—this, I say, were no better than to quite despair of man. Nay, it were to confess that all which is most akin to God in his human instincts is only semblance without reality. Do we not all find within us some dim ideal, at least, of a state unrealized, where action is its own impulse,—where the struggles of birth are over, and the friction of interest and care is no longer felt,—where all that is best and highest is freest, and joyous because it is free,—where to be is to be great, because the inspiration of the soul is full, and to do is easy as to conceive,—where action is itself sublime, because it is the play of ease, and the equilibrium of rest?

Let no one imagine that I derogate thus from the dignity of work. Rather do I dignify it the more that I represent it as the preparative to a state so exalted. Possibly our modern writers, in their zeal to dignify work, have sometimes excluded or omitted the notice of this, which is its

only dignity. Indeed, some of our poets seem to have worked harder to change the world's work into poetry than the world need have done to finish it in prose. Work is transitional, having its good in its end. The design is, that, by a fixed law of nature, it shall pass into play. This is its proper honor and joy.

Let us notice, then, for a moment, in what manner work becomes the preparative or necessary condition of play. Observe the child as a playing creature in the muscular life. Full of animated glee, unable to contain the exuberant vivacity of his instincts, he must needs expend himself in action. He leaps about the ground, climbs into the trees, screams among his fellows in notes that tingle on the air, not because he will, or has any ulterior end, but because the play-fund is in him, and he must. But we do not always note that a period of trial answering to work was necessary to prepare this liberty of motion,—that the child had first to practise eye, voice, ear, hand, foot, putting forth carefully by little and little, and gradually getting possession of the bodily machinery that now plays so nimbly. Every muscle in his body had, in fact, to be graduated in the little university of motion, before he was ready for play. He had many falls to suffer, in order to get the balance of his members; much crying to do, to get possession of his voice; and this, I suppose, must be taken for work.

By the same kind of necessity is mental and spiritual work necessary to the play state of the soul. The man must go into experiment, through experiment or study get possession of his soul, so that he can turn every faculty whithersoever he will, and have the whole internal machinery in the exactest play. I speak not here of the discipline merely of schools and colleges, but, as much, of the struggles we encounter and the scenes through which we pass in this great school of life,—its objects, relations, and duties; its sturdy trials, fears, falls, crosses; its works, and wars, and woes,—all discovering to us, and thus helping us to possess, ourselves. We get the helm thus of our thoughts, tempers, passions, aspirations, and wants. And if a vigorous training in the school be added, our capacities of taste, fancy, observation, and reason are also discovered, and limbered for the free activity of spiritual play.

It will also be seen that this free state of man involves a moral experience, and possibly somewhat of a bad or selfish experience, whereby his choices may be settled in the permanent love of goodness. For this, in fact, is the greatness of all greatness, that it is of the man himself, the measure of his own free aims and aspirations. And if so much depends on the soul's choices, it needs to be made wise that it may choose wisely, and possibly to choose unwisely in order that it may

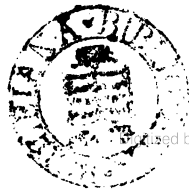
be wise. Thus it descends into selfishness and evil, which are only forms of work, there to learn the wisdom of goodness in the contrasts of distaste, weariness, and hunger. And this, I suppose, is the solution of the various travail that is given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. Some men work to get money,—others, quite as hard to spend it. Some men work to get reputation,—others, who have it by accident, work harder in seeing it go by a law. There is a laborious ease, and even a laborious idleness. What we call pleasure is commonly but another name for work,—a strenuous joy, a laboriously prepared and therefore wearisome happiness. We all go to our self-serving and work, till at last we learn, it may be, to cease from ourselves, and then — we play.

But there is yet another office served by work, without which the state of play is never complete. The man must find inspiring forces, objects that exalt the feeling, ideals to embrace that will beget a spontaneous greatness in him. But he is ignorant, at first, even of facts; and how shall he find his ideals, unless they are discovered in the practical throes of experience, labor, and study? How shall he turn himself to things that shine with their own brightness, ideal objects born of the soul's own thought and luminous by a divine quality hid in themselves, unless he has sweltered for a time in self-exercise and the dust of labor? Then, at last, he

conceives and embraces in his love sublimity, beauty, honor, truth, charity, God; and the inspiration he feels imparts to him somewhat of a higher nature, spontaneously good, wise, great,—joyous of necessity.

Thus it is that work prepares the state of play. Passing over now to this latter, observe the intense longing of the race for some such higher and freer state of being. They call it by no name. Probably most of them have but dimly conceived what they are after. The more evident will it be that they are after this, when we find them covering over the whole ground of life, and filling up the contents of history, with their counterfeits or misconceived attempts. If the hidden fire is seen bursting up on every side, to vent itself in flame, we may certainly know that the ground is full.

Let it not surprise you, if I name, as a first illustration here, the general devotion of our race to money. This passion for money is allowed to be a sordid passion, — one that is rankest in the least generous and most selfish of mankind; and yet a conviction has always been felt, that it must have its heat in the most central fires and divinest affinities of our nature. Thus, the poet calls it the *auri sacra fames*, — *sacra*, as being a curse, and that in the divine life of the race. Childhood being passed, and the play-fund of motion so far spent that running on foot no longer appears to be the joy it was, the older child, now called a man,



fancies that it will make him happy to ride ! Or he imagines, which is much the same, some loftier state of being, — call it rest, retirement, competence, independence, — no matter by what name, only be it a condition of use, ease, liberty, and pure enjoyment. And so we find the whole race at work to get rid of work ; drudging themselves to-day, in the hope of play to-morrow. This is that *sacra fames*, which, misconceiving its own unutterable longings after spiritual play, proposes to itself the dull felicity of cessation, and drives the world to madness in pursuit of a counterfeit, which it is work to obtain, work also to keep, and yet harder work oftentimes to enjoy.

Here, too, is the secret of that profound passion for the drama, which has been so conspicuous in the cultivated nations. We love to see life in its feeling and activity, separated from its labors and historic results. Could we see all human changes transpire poetically or creatively, that is, in play, letting our soul play with them as they pass, then it were only poetry to live. Then to admire, love, laugh, — then to abhor, pity, weep, — all were alike grateful to us ; for the view of suffering separated from all reality, save what it has to feeling, only yields a painful joy, which is the deeper joy because of the pain. Hence the written drama, offering to view in its impersonations a life one side of life, a life in which all the actings appear without the ends and simply as in play, becomes to the cultivated reader a spring of the in-

tensest and most captivating spiritual incitement. He beholds the creative genius of a man playing out impersonated groups and societies of men, clothing each with life, passion, individuality, and character, by the fertile activity of his own inspired feeling. Meantime the writer himself is hidden, and cannot even suggest his existence. Hence egotism, which also is a form of work, the dullest, most insipid, least inspiring of all human demonstrations, is nowhere allowed to obtrude itself. As a reader, too, he has no ends to think of or to fear, — nothing to do, but to play the characters into his feeling as creatures existing for his sake. In this view, the drama, as a product of genius, is, within a certain narrow limit, the realization of play.

But far less effectively, or more faintly, when it is acted. Then the counterfeit, as it is more remote, is more feeble. In the reading we invent our own sceneries, clothe into form and expression each one of the characters, and play out our own liberty in them as freely, and sometimes as divinely, as they. Whatever reader, therefore, has a soul of true life and fire within him, finds all expectation balked, when he becomes an auditor and spectator. The scenery is tawdry and flat, the characters, definitely measured, have lost their infinity, so to speak, and thus their freedom, and what before was play descends to nothing better or more inspired than work. It is called going to the play, but it should rather

be called going to the work, that is, to see a play worked, (yes, an *opera!* that is it!) — men and women inspired through their memory, and acting their inspirations by rote, panting into love, pumping at the fountains of grief, whipping out the passions into fury, and dying to fulfil the contract of the evening, by a forced holding of the breath. And yet this feeble counterfeit of play, which some of us would call only “very tragical mirth,” has a power to the multitude. They are moved, thrilled it may be, with a strange delight. It is as if a something in their nature, higher than they themselves know, were quickened into power, — namely, that divine instinct of play, in which the summit of our nature is most clearly revealed.

In like manner, the passion of our race for war, and the eager admiration yielded to warlike exploits, are resolvable principally into the same fundamental cause. Mere ends and uses do not satisfy us. We must get above prudence and economy, into something that partakes of inspiration, be the cost what it may. Hence war, another and yet more magnificent counterfeit of play. Thus there is a great and lofty virtue that we call courage (*cour-age*), taking our name from the heart. It is the greatness of a great heart, the repose and confidence of a man whose soul is rested in truth and principle. Such a man has no ends ulterior to his duty, — duty itself is his end. He is in it therefore as in play, lives it as an inspiration. Lifted thus out of mere prudence and con-

trivance, he is also lifted above fear. Life to him is the outgoing of his great heart, — *heart-age*, action from the heart. And because he now can die, without being shaken or perturbed by any of the dastardly feelings that belong to self-seeking and work, because he partakes of the impassibility of his principles, we call him a hero, regarding him as a kind of god, a man who has gone up into the sphere of the divine.

Then, since courage is a joy so high, a virtue of so great majesty, what could happen but that many will covet both the internal exaltation and the outward repute of it? Thus comes bravery, which is the counterfeit, or mock virtue. Courage is of the heart, as we have said; bravery is of the will. One is the spontaneous joy and repose of a truly great soul; the other, bravery, is after an end ulterior to itself, and, in that view, is but a form of work, — about the hardest work, too, I fancy, that some men undertake. What can be harder, in fact, than to act a great heart, when one has nothing but a will wherewith to do it?

Thus you will see that courage is above danger, bravery in it, doing battle on a level with it. One is secure and tranquil, the other suppresses agitation or conceals it. A right mind fortifies one, shame stimulates the other. Faith is the nerve of one, risk the plague and tremor of the other. For if I may tell you just here a very important secret, there be many that are called heroes who are yet without

courage. They brave danger by their will, when their heart trembles. They make up in violence what they want in tranquillity, and drown the tumult of their fears in the rage of their passions. Enter the heart and you shall find, too often, a dastard spirit lurking in your hero. Call him still a brave man, if you will, only remember that he lacks courage.

No, the true hero is the great, wise man of duty, — he whose soul is armed by truth and supported by the smile of God, — he who meets life's perils with a cautious but tranquil spirit, gathers strength by facing its storms, and dies, if he is called to die, as a Christian victor at the post of duty. And if we must have heroes, and wars wherein to make them, there is no so brilliant war as a war with wrong, no hero so fit to be sung as he who has gained the bloodless victory of truth and mercy.

But if bravery be not the same as courage, still it is a very imposing and plausible counterfeit. The man himself is told, after the occasion is past, how heroically he bore himself, and when once his nerves have become tranquillized, he begins even to believe it. And since we cannot stay content in the dull, uninspired world of economy and work, we are as ready to see a hero as he to be one. Nay, we must have our heroes, as I just said, and we are ready to harness ourselves, by the million, to any man who will let us fight him out the name. Thus we find out occasions for war, — wrongs to be redressed, re-

venges to be taken, such as we may feign inspiration and play the great heart under. We collect armies, and dress up leaders in gold and high colors, meaning, by the brave look, to inspire some notion of a hero beforehand. Then we set the men in phalanxes and squadrons, where the personality itself is taken away, and a vast impersonal person called an army, a magnanimous and brave monster, is all that remains. The masses of fierce color, the glitter of steel, the dancing plumes, the waving flags, the deep throb of the music lifting every foot, — under these the living acres of men, possessed by the one thought of playing brave to-day, are rolled on to battle. Thunder, fire, dust, blood, groans, — what of these? — nobody thinks of these, for nobody dares to think till the day is over, and then the world rejoices to behold a new batch of heroes!

And this is the Devil's play, that we call war. We have had it going on ever since the old geologic era was finished. We are sick enough of the matter of it. We understand well enough that it is not good economy. But we cannot live on work. We must have courage, inspiration, greatness, play. Even the moral of our nature, that which is to weave us into social union with our kind before God, is itself thirsting after play; and if we cannot have it in good, why then let us have it in as good as we can. It is at least some comfort, that we do not mean quite as badly in these wars as some men say. We are not

in love with murder, we are not simple tigers in feeling, and some of us come out of battle with kind and gentle qualities left. We only must have our play.

Note also this, that, since the metaphysics of fighting have been investigated, we have learned to make much of what we call the *moral* of the army; by which we mean the feeling that wants to play brave. Only it is a little sad to remember that this same moral, as it is called, is the true, eternal, moral nature of the man thus terribly perverted, — that which was designed to link him to his God and his kind, and ought to be the spring of his immortal inspirations.

There has been much of speculation among the learned concerning the origin of chivalry; nor has it always been clear to what human elements this singular institution is to be referred. But when we look on man, not as a creature of mere understanding and reason, but as a creature also of play, essentially a poet in that which constitutes his higher life, we seem to have a solution of the origin of chivalry, which is sufficient, whether it be true or not. In the forswearing of labor, in the brave adventures of a life in arms, in the intense ideal devotion to woman as her protector and avenger, in the self-renouncing and almost self-oblivious worship of honor, — what do we see in these but the mock moral doings of a creature who is to escape self-love and the service of ends in a free, spontaneous life of goodness, — in

whom courage, delicacy, honor, disinterested deeds, are themselves to be the inspiration, as they are the end, of his being?

I might also show, passing into the sphere of religion, how legal obedience, which is work, always descends into superstition, and thus that religion must, in its very nature and life, be a form of play, — a worship offered, a devotion paid, not for some ulterior end, but as being its own end and joy. I might also show, in the same manner, that all the enthusiastic, fanatical, and properly quietistic modes of religion are as many distinct counterfeits, and, in that manner, illustrations of my subject. But this you will see at a glance, without illustration. Only observe how vast a field our illustrations cover. In the infatuated zeal of our race for the acquisition of money, in the drama, in war, in chivalry, in perverted religion, — in all these forms, covering almost the whole ground of humanity with counterfeits of play, that are themselves the deepest movements of the race, I show you the boundless sweep of this divine instinct, and how surely we may know that the perfected state of man is a state of beauty, truth, and love, where life is its own end and joy.

Passing now into the life of letters, we may carry with us a light that will make intelligible and clear some important distinctions that are not always apprehended.

Here is the distinction between genius and talent, which some of our youthful scholars are curious to settle. Genius is that which is good for play, talent that which is good for work. The genius is an inspired man, a man whose action is liberty, whose creations are their own end and joy. Therefore we speak, not of the man's doing this or that, but of the man's genius as doing it, — as if there were some second spirit attendant, yielding him thoughts, senses, imaginations, fires of emotion, that are above his measure, — lifting him thus into exaltations of freedom and power that partake of a certain divine quality. His distinction is, in fact, that he is a demonized or demonizable man. Talent, on the other hand, we conceive to be of the man himself, a capacity that is valuable as related to ends and uses, such as the acquisition of knowledge or money, to build, cultivate, teach, frame policies, manage causes, fill magistracies.

But we need to add that talent, in every sphere, passes into genius through exercise; for if geniuses are born, as we sometimes hear, they must yet be born again of study, struggle, and work. First the man comes into action, gets possession of himself, fills out the tone of his energies by efforts and struggles that are of the will. If then ideas find him, when he is ploughing in uses, and drop their mantle on him, he becomes a prophet. I say, if they find him; for he is little likely to find them, by going after them. Inspiration sought is inspiration hin-

dered. It must be a call. No man makes a breeze for his vessel by blowing in the sail himself. Neither is any man to act the genius wilfully, or to have it for a question, previous to study and work, whether possibly he is born to the life of genius. To pre-conceive the life is, in fact, not to suffer it. The most any mortal can do in this matter is to do nothing, — save to offer a pure, industrious, lively nature to all beauty and good, and be willing to serve them, till he is permitted to reign with them. If then there fall into his bosom, as it were out of heaven, thoughts, truths, feelings, acts of good to be done, all of which are joy and reward in their own nature, and the man, taking fire in these, as with something divine, rises into play, that is the kind of activity we mean by the word *genius*. For if there be an example, now and then, of some precocious fondling, who appears to be born to inspiration, and begins to play in the lap, as it were, of mere nature, — plays in the university as a poet, too divinely gifted for the tough discipline of study, — if possibly he is reckoned a genius, he will yet turn out to be a genius of the small order, and it will be wonderful, if, as lambs and kittens are sobered by the graver habit of their majority, the growth of his beard does not exhaust his inspiration. However this may be, all the heavy and massive forms of genius, all the giants of inspiration, are sons of work.

Such being the distinction between talent and ge-

nius, we shall look for a like distinction in their demonstrations, — the distinction, namely, of work and play, activity for an end and activity as an end, that of the empty and that of the full, the acquisitive and the creative, the ascent of the ladder and the ascent of fire.

Here lies the distinction between wit and humor, a distinction which the rhetoricians have not always distinctly traced, though well aware of some real and very wide difference in their effects. Wit is work, humor is play. One is the dry labor of intention or design, ambition eager to provoke applause, malignity biting at an adversary, envy letting down the good or the exalted. The other, humor, is the soul reeking with its own moisture, laughing because it is full of laughter, as ready to weep as to laugh; for the copious shower it holds is good for either. And then, when it has set the trees a-dripping,

“ And hung a pearl in every cowslip’s ear,”

the pure sun shining after will reveal no color of intention in the sparkling drop, but will leave you doubting still whether it be a drop let fall by laughter, or — a tear.

The rhetoricians have also labored much to make out some external definition by which prose may be distinguished from poetry. No such distinction is possible, till we pass into the mind of the writer, and contemplate his subjective state. If he writes for some use or end ulterior to the writing, and of course

superior as a motive, or if we read with a feeling produced that the writing is only means to an end, that is prose. On the other hand, every sort of writing which is its own end, an utterance made because the soul is full of feeling, beauty, and truth, and wants to behold her own joy, is poetry. She sings because the music is in her heart. Her divine thought burns, and words flock round about, fanning the fire with their wings, till she goes up in flame, unable to stay.

Poetry, therefore, is play, as distinguished from prose, which is work. Hence, too, poetry is distinguished from prose by a certain quality that we call rhythm. For when a man thinks or acts for an end ulterior, suggested by self-love, then the drag of his end, being towards himself, makes a specialty of him, — he is a mote in the great universe, centred in itself and not in the sun, and pulling to get something to or into itself; therefore he is out of rhythm in his feeling, and the music of the stars will not chime with him. But when he lets go his private want or end to play, then he is part of the great universe under God, and consciously one with it, and then he falls into the rhythmic dance of the worlds, giving utterance, in beat and number, to a feeling that is itself played into beat and number, weaving and waving with those graces that circle the throne of all beauty, and chiming with the choirs of light in their universal, but, to the most of mankind, inaudible, hymn. Or, to bring an instance from below the stars, where no fiction may

be suspected ; as the mountains of the world, having a certain secret law of rhythm in their moulds and granite masses, take up the discordant sounds of horns or screaming voices, part the discords, toss the silvering harmonies about in reduplicating beats of echo, and fine away the notes till they seem vibrations of spirit, pulsing still, after the air is silent, — so, when a man falls under inspiration from God and his worlds, and begins to play, his soul forthwith becomes a tuneful creature, his thoughts submit to the universal rhythmic laws, and when he speaks he sings.

If in verse, then, the number is cast by the feeling or inspiration, — it is of the feeling, — and the words are gathered into their places, not by choice, but by a certain instinct which they themselves feel, as when birds of passage draw their lines of living order in the sky. If the writing be in the form of prose, and yet be truly in play, still it will be felt that some higher law than choice has called the words into their places. We have still a feeling of number and rhythm, and certain mystic junctures and cadences, born, as it were, of music, remind us that the son of song is here.

The same may be said of the orator ; for there is no definite line of distinction, as many imagine, between the true orator and the poet, — unless we say that the orator is the poet in action, the impersonation of rhythm and play. For though the speaker begins with a cause which he is charged to gain, yet as he kindles with his theme and rises into inspired action,

his men become gods, his cause is lifted out of the particular into the universal, or into such a height that speaking for it becomes an end in itself, and he, also, in place of a plain prose speaker, becomes an improvisator. What he began with a purpose hurries him on now as a passion. His look changes. His voice takes a modulation not of the will. His words and cadences seem rather to make use of him than to be used by him. His action, being no longer voluntary, but spontaneous, falls into the rhythm of play, where you distinguish the sharp, invective iambic, the solemn, religious spondee, the swift trochaic run of eagerness or fear, the heavy molossic tread of grief or sorrow. He becomes, in fact, a free lyric in his own living person, the most animated and divinest embodiment of play, — thus and therefore a power sublime above all others possible to man.

Pursuing the same method, I might also exhibit a similar distinction of work and play between rhetorical beauty, as labored out by rules, and the free beauty of original creation. Criticism holds a like relation to all the productive energies of genius; logic also a like relation to the spiritual insight of reason; understanding a like relation to the realizations of faith.

There is yet another topic which requires to be illustrated, in order to complete my subject, but which I can touch only in the briefest manner. I speak of philosophic method, or the true method of scientific



discovery. The inductive method, sometimes called the Baconian, is commonly represented in a manner that would make the philosopher the dullest of beings, and philosophy the dullest of all drudgeries. It is merely to classify facts on a basis of comparison or abstraction, — that is, to arrange a show-box and call it philosophy! No, the first and really divine work of philosophy is to generate ideas, which are then to be verified by facts or experiments. Therefore we shall find that a certain capacity of elevation or poetic ardor is the most fruitful source of discovery. The man is raised to a pitch of insight and becomes a seer, entering into things through God's constitutive ideas, to read them as from God. For what are laws of science but ideas of God, — those regulative types of thought by which God created, moves, and rules the worlds? Thus it is that the geometrical and mathematical truths become the prime sources of scientific inspiration; for these are the pure intellectualities of all created being, and have their life, therefore, in God. Accordingly, an eloquent modern writer says, — “I am persuaded that many a problem of analysis of Kepler, Galileo, Newton, and Euler, and the solution of many an equation, suppose as much intuition and inspiration as the finest ode of Pindar. Those pure and incorruptible formulas which already were before the world was, that will be after it, governing throughout all time and space, being, as it were, an integral part of God, put the mathematician in pro-

found communion with the Divine Thought. In those immutable truths, he savors what is purest in the creation. He says to the worlds, like the ancient, — ‘Let us be silent, we shall hear the murmuring of the Gods.’”

Accordingly we find, as a matter of historic fact, that the singular and truly wonderful man who first broke into the ordinances of heaven and got a foothold there for definite science was inflamed and led on by the inspirations of geometry. “Figures pleased me,” he says, “as being quantities, and as having existed before the heavens.” Therefore he expected to find the heavens included under geometric figures. Half mad with prophetic feeling, and astrologically possessed, also, by the stars, he goes up among them praying and joking and experimenting together, trying on, as it were, his geometric figures to see how they will fit, and scolding the obstinacy of heaven when they will not; doubting then whether “perhaps the gibbous moon, in the bright constellation of the Bull’s forehead, is not filling his mind with fantastic images”; returning again to make another trial, and enduring labors which, if done in the spirit of work, would have crushed any mortal, — till, at last, behold! his prophetic formula settles into place! the heavens acknowledge it! And he breaks out in holy frenzy, crying, — “What I prophesied two-and-twenty years ago, as soon as I discovered the five solids among the heavenly orbits, — what I believed before I had seen

Ptolemy's Harmonics, — what I had promised my friends, — that for which I joined Tycho Brahe, I have brought to light! It is now eighteen months since I got the first glimpse of light; three months since the dawn; very few days since the unveiled sun, most admirable to gaze on, burst out upon me. Nothing holds me; I indulge my sacred fury! I triumph over mankind! The die is cast; the book is written, — to be read, either now, or by posterity, I care not which. It may well wait a century for a reader, as God has been waiting six thousand years for an observer!"

And yet this man was no philosopher, some will say; he did not proceed by induction and the classification of facts, he only made a lucky guess! Be it so, it was yet such a guess as must be made before science could get any firm hold of the sky, — such a guess as none but this most enthusiastic and divinely gifted mortal, trying at every gate of knowledge there, could ever have made.

So, too, it is now, always has been, always will be, — boast of our Baconian method as we may, misconceive the real method of philosophy as we certainly do, — all great discoveries, not purely accidental, will be gifts to insight, and the true man of science will be he who can best ascend into the thoughts of God, — he who burns before the throne in the clearest, purest, mildest light of reason.

Thus, also, it was that a Linnæus, when the mystic and almost thinking laws of vegetable life began to

open upon him, cried, — “*Deum sempiternum, omniscium, omnipotentem, a tergo transeuntem, vidi, et obstupui!*”

So, too, when the animate races are to open their wondrous history, you yourselves have seen the hand of play, or of scientific genius, dashing out, stroke by stroke, in a few free lines, those creative types of God in which the living orders had their spring; and have seemed, in the chalk formation of the lecture-room, to see those creatures leaping into life, which the other and older chalk formation under ground has garnered there, as the cabinet of Jehovah.

But it is time to bring these illustrations to a close, and it is scarcely for me to choose the manner. They have their own proper close, towards which they have all the way been drawing us, and that we must now accept; namely, this, — that, as childhood begins with play, so the last end of man, the pure ideal in which his being is consummated, is a state of play. And if we look for this perfected state, we shall find it nowhere, save in religion. Here at last man is truly and completely man. Here the dry world of work and the scarcely less dry counterfeits of play are left behind. Partial inspirations no longer suffice. The man ascends into a state of free beauty, where well-doing is its own end and joy, where life is the simple flow of love, and thought, no longer colored in the prismatic hues of prejudice and sin, rejoices ever in

the clear white light of truth. Exactly this we mean, when we say that Christianity brings an offer of liberty to man ; for the Christian liberty is only pure spiritual play. Delivered of self-love, fear, contrivance, legal constraints, terragant passions, in a word, of all ulterior ends not found in goodness itself, the man ascends into power, and reveals, for the first time, the real greatness of his nature.

I speak thus, not professionally, but as any one, who is simply a man of letters, should. I am well aware that Christianity has hitherto failed to realize the noble consummation of which I speak. We have been too much in opinions to receive inspirations ; occupied too much with fires and anathemas, to be filled with this pure love ; too conversant with mock virtues and uncharitable sanctities, to receive this beauty or be kindled by this heavenly flame. And yet how evident is it that religion is the only element of perfected freedom and greatness to a soul ! for here alone does it finally escape from self, and come into the perfect life of play. For just as the matter of the worlds wants a law to settle its motions and be its element of order, so all intelligences want their element of light, rest, beauty, and play in God. Hence we are to look, as the world rises out of its barbaric fires and baptized animosities into the simple and free life of love, to see a beauty unfolded in human thought and feeling as much more graceful as it is freer and closer to God. Christian love is demonstrably the only true

ground of a perfect æsthetic culture. Indeed, there is no perfect culture of any kind, which does not carry the man out of himself, and kindle in his human spirit those free aspirations that shall bear him up, as in flame, to God's own person.

Therefore I believe in a future age, yet to be revealed, which is to be distinguished from all others as the godly or godlike age, — an age not of universal education simply, or universal philanthropy, or external freedom, or political well-being, but a day of reciprocity and free intimacy between all souls and God. Learning and religion, the scholar and the Christian, will not be divided as they have been. The universities will be filled with a profound spirit of religion, and the *bene orásse* will be a fountain of inspiration to all the investigations of study and the creations of genius.

I raise this expectation of the future, not because some prophet of old time has spoken of a day to come, when “the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof,” (for I know not that he meant to be so interpreted,) but because I find a prophecy of play in our nature itself, which it were a violation of all insight not to believe will some time be fulfilled. And when it is fulfilled, it will be found that Christianity has, at last, developed a new literary era, — the era of religious love.

Hitherto, the love of passion has been the central

fire of the world's literature. The dramas, epics, odes, novels, and even histories, have spoken to the world's heart chiefly through this passion, and through this have been able to get their answer. For this passion is a state of play, wherein the man loses himself, in the ardor of a devotion, regardless of interest, fear, care, prudence, and even of life itself. Hence there gathers round the lover a tragic interest, and we hang upon his destiny, as if some natural charm or spell were in it. Now this passion of love, which has hitherto been the staple of literature, is only a crude symbol in the life of nature, by which God designs to interpret, and also to foreshadow, the higher love of religion, — nature's gentle Beatrice, who leaves her image in the youthful Dante, and is therefore to attend him afterwards in the spirit flight of song, and be his guide upward through the wards of Paradise to the shining mount of God. What, then, are we to think, but that God will some time bring us up out of the literature of the lower love, into that of the higher, — that as the age of passion yields, at last, to the age of reason, so the crude love of instinct shall give place to the pure intellectual love of God? And then, around that nobler love, or out of it, shall arise a new body of literature, as much more gifted as the inspiration is purer and more intellectual. Beauty, truth, and worship, song, science, and duty, will all be unfolded together in the common love of God.

Society must of course receive a correspondent

beauty into its character and feeling, such as can be satisfied no longer with the old barbaric themes of war and passion. To be a scholar and not to be a Christian, to produce the fruits of genius without a Christian inspiration, will no longer be thought of, and religion, heretofore looked upon as a ghostly constraint upon life, it will now be acknowledged, is the only sufficient fertilizer of genius, as it is the only real emancipator of man.

If now it be doubted whether a hope of so great beauty is ever to be realized here on earth, so also is it doubted, I may well reply, whether those sublime visions of the Christian seer, which are given us in the last chapters of Revelation, refer to scenes of this life or of the life to come. And may it not be because the beauty of the one is at last to come into so close a resemblance to that of the other as to leave no definite line between them? Let no expectation seem romantic because it wears the air of poetry; for religion is itself the elemental force of all free beauty, and thus of a life essentially poetic. Its inspired seers and prophets are the poets of God. Its glorious future bursts up ever into song, and pictures itself to the view in poetic sceneries and visions. Even the occupations and felicities of the good beyond life are representable only in the play of choirs and chimes of poetic joy. Music and rhythm are the natural powers, indeed, of order and crystallization, in the social life of all moral natures, — as we see in the fact that the

ancient laws of the race were framed in verse, and sung into authority, as the *carmen necessarium* of the state. Therefore I can easily persuade myself, that, if the world were free, — free, I mean, of themselves, — brought up all out of work into the pure inspiration of truth and charity, new forms of personal and intellectual beauty would appear, and society itself reveal the Orphic movement. No more will it be imagined that poetry and rhythm are accidents or figments of the race, one side of all ingredient or ground in nature. But we shall know that poetry is the real and true state of man, the proper and last ideal of souls, the free beauty they long for, and the rhythmic flow of that universal play in which all life would live.





